Tennyson. Mackay, A. M.

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MR. ERIC MACKAY

AND

"VOX CLAMANTIS."

A SUMMARY

OF INCIDENTS

CONTROVERTING ASSERTIONS

CONTAINED IN TWO LETTERS

addressed to

The Editor of "The Birmingham Daily Gazette."

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'First Fear his hand, its skill to try,
Amid the chords bewildered laid,
And back recoiled, he knew not why,
E'en at the sound HIMSELF had made.'

—*Collins's 'Ode to the Passions.'*

"VOX CLAMANTIS."

On the 30th November, 1880, Mr. Eric Mackay wrote, spontaneously, a Letter directing attention to Tennyson's Poem entitled "Columbus," recently published, as compared with "Columbus at Seville," published in 1869, and re-issued in 1876. This communication eventually induced a correspondence; whereupon Mr. Eric Mackay agreed to write a critical Essay evidencing numerous striking resemblances in the two poems. *Vox clamantis* was produced by Mr. Mackay, and proffered by him to Publishers. When the pamphlet had been passed for press, Mr. Mackay required it to be anonymous; the Publishers objected, saying it would have no weight without the author's name. The work was, in some instances, unfavourably reviewed: Mr. Mackay then demonstrated his displeasure by two letters to a provincial Newspaper, denying authorship of *Vox clamantis*.

MR. MACKAY'S FIRST LETTER.

To the Editor of the "Birmingham Daily Gazette."

Sir—

Quite recently appeared in your columns a review of a *brochure* attacking Lord Tennyson, on the cover and title-page of which appear these words: "'Vox clamantis,' by Eric Mackay." Will you permit me to protest against that review? *I am not the author of "Vox clamantis."* I assisted another person in writing what was intended to be a comparison between two poems on the same subject. But, as it

stands, the composition is not mine. I forbade its publication unless revised by me. Five silly pages of so-called parallels were inserted without my permission. All my manuscript was tampered with; every word I had written in praise of Tennyson was struck out "as being unnecessary;" and an entire page of mottoes in Latin and English was affixed to my manuscript, *none of which I selected*, and against which I protested in no measured terms. One of these was an offensive quotation from a French writer; one was the well-known line from *Hamlet*, "By these pickers and stealers," &c., Tennyson being aimed at as the picker and stealer. These mottoes were reluctantly abandoned by my collaborator and a clean page substituted.

As regards the *brochure* in its present form, I have to say—1st, that I repudiate its authorship, and am taking legal proceedings; and 2nd, that I deeply regret its publication. I have a great reverence for the name of Tennyson. He and Browning and Swinburne are, as we all know, among the glories of England; and I grieve to be pointed at, in your columns, as a decrier of great men—as one possessed of "envy and malice" in my judgment of contemporaries. My enclosed sonnet, recently written and sent to Browning in manuscript, will show how far I am from envy and malice—how conscious I am of the superiority of others over myself. Though "Vox clamantis" has, it seems, been out for nearly a month, I have only just heard of its publication, and this must be my excuse for not writing to you sooner. I feel assured that you will, in the interests of literature, if not in mine, give prominency to this letter, which in no way dares to find fault with your excellent review, in the spirit of which I entirely concur. Had I known three years ago as much as I do now about the real causes of the similarity between "Columbus" and its precursor, "Columbus at Seville"—namely, the identity of books consulted by both authors—I should not have written a word of the manuscript on which "Vox clamantis" has been built up.

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

ERIC MACKAY.

London, Oct. 30, 1886.

REPLY OF THE PUBLISHERS.

To the Editor of the "Birmingham Daily Gazette."

SIR—

We are, professionally, interested in contradicting, wholly and particularly, the statements made by Mr. Eric Mackay in your paper of 2nd inst. (only now brought under our notice), denying his authorship of a pamphlet lately published, entitled "Vox clamantis," the manuscript of which—in his own handwriting, including his name on the title-page, is in our possession, and may be seen at this office. The *Press Proof* of "Vox clamantis" (also in our possession) was finally corrected by Mr. Mackay. His letter of December 14th, 1885, runs thus: "I have no way of expressing in a substantial way my delight, than by doing, as Hamlet says, my 'most best' for the V. C.—when it requires promulgation—and I believe in that way I can do much;" and of January 4th, "You ought to advertise the V. C. in *Athenæum*, *Academy*, &c., &c., and have a goodly show of them at the bookstalls." Moreover, Mr. Mackay himself offered the work to at least two publishers; and at the time he proposed to withdraw his name from the title-page (June 8th), he wrote, "Mr. —— has ere this received my letter telling him the pamphlet is to be anonymous, and that nothing, not even a word, is to be altered": hence he had no scruple at publishing anonymously the very critique he now pretends to repudiate. The publishers, however, thought that with no name, or with a pseudonym, the pamphlet, from its peculiarly egotistical tone, would be valueless and ridiculous. We are informed that, contrary to what he states, the passage, "By these pickers and stealers," &c., was *proposed by Mr. Mackay*, and disapproved of by his adviser, and that the "offensive French quotation" mentioned in his letter to you was *Comme deux gouttes d'eau!*

But, irrespective of the above conclusive evidence, we think the conspicuously personal and individualistic style of "Vox clamantis" carries conviction that its author wrote it after his own manner and conception, and with the purpose of publishing the work in his own name.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

W. STEWART & Co.

41, Farringdon Street, E.C., Nov. 9, 1886.

P.S.—We have no intimation of "legal proceedings" said to be taken by Mr. Mackay.—W. S. & Co.

REPLY OF THE SOLICITOR.

To the Editor of the "Birmingham Daily Gazette."

SIR—

It is a sufficient answer to Mr. Eric Mackay's letter, which I have just seen, to state that I have in my possession the MSS., in his handwriting, with the words on the title page of the pamphlet "Vox clamantis—The Poet Laureate—by Eric Mackay," and also a final proof in print as submitted to him, and from this proof on its return the pamphlet as it now appears is accurately printed.

I have also a letter from him in which he says: "I have no way of expressing in a substantial way my delight than by doing, as Hamlet says, my most best for the V. C. when it requires promulgation."

Also another letter, in which he says, "You ought to advertise the V. C. (Vox clamantis) in *Athenæum*, *Academy*, &c., &c., and have a goodly show of them at the bookstalls." Another letter commences with the words, "As author of Vox clamantis."

Your obedient servant,

W. M. WILKINSON.

44, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, W.C., Nov. 10, 1886.

MR. MACKAY'S SECOND LETTER.

To the Editor of the "Birmingham Daily Gazette."

SIR—

In reply to the letter of Messrs. Stewart & Co., in your issue of yesterday, the 11th inst., I have only to say that it is a gross misrepresentation of facts. Up to this time I have been silent as to the true history of the "Vox clamantis," but I cannot afford to have my name traduced in connection with it to serve as a shelter to those who are afraid to acknowledge their share in the work. The instigator and

part-author of the pamphlet is Mr. J—— E——* himself, and what I state I can prove by letters of his in my possession, one of which I enclose.

As a student of literature, I found certain points of resemblance between Lord Tennyson's "Columbus" and Mr. J—— E——'s "Columbus at Seville," which I thought curious, if not convincing. I one day informed Mr. E—— of those fancied similarities, and he at once proposed that I should write a pamphlet on the subject. This I did without rudeness to the Laureate and without undue praise of the inferior author; and I received from Mr. E—— a remuneration for my labour about equal to that given for a tolerably long magazine article. After the manuscript had quitted my hands, Mr. E—— commenced his operations of altering, omitting, revising, and adding; so that at the last I found it difficult to recognise my own sentences. This hacking about of my work continued through a term of three years, and when I remonstrated Mr. E—— wrote to me as follows:—"It seems to me that your strict injunctions might have been accompanied by some recognition of the assistance derived from the secretary and one other"—that other being himself. Need I say more? Will Messrs. Stewart & Co. deny that they promised not to publish without my knowledge, and not to use my name without my permission? You will observe that the pamphlet—printed by Messrs. Billing & Co., of Guildford (by order of a gentleman acting for Mr. E——)—bears no printer's name.

Why do Messrs. Stewart & Co. not quote from my letter to Mr. E——, in which I absolutely refused the use of my name unless allowed time to re-write the whole thing? I never meant the "Vox clamantis" (so named by Mr. E——) to be the attack on Tennyson into which it has degenerated, and of which, as it stands, I repudiate the authorship. I perceive by their postscript that Messrs. Stewart & Co. are impatient concerning the "legal proceedings;" this impatience will be gratified by my forthcoming action for damages.

I am, Sir, respectfully yours,

ERIC MACKAY.

London, Nov. 12.

* Author of "Cæsar in Egypt," &c.

SECOND REPLY OF THE PUBLISHERS.

To the Editor of the "Birmingham Daily Gazette."

SIR—

Mr. Eric Mackay having addressed a second letter to you in which he re-iterates that he is not the author of "Vox clamantis," we may add to our former letter that Mr. Eric Mackay himself took the print of the pamphlet, as it now appears, to at least two Publishers, with a view to its publication. We may also accept his challenge, *and deny that we ever promised him we would not publish it without his knowledge*. On the contrary, we told him that, his MS. having been paid for, it was no longer his, and that consequently we could not recognise his *locus standi*.

Yours truly,

W. STEWART & Co.

41, Farringdon Street, E.C., Nov. 19, 1886.

THE ensuing Extracts from some private letters written by Mr. Mackay are added for further elucidation of the questions raised in Mr. Mackay's letters to the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*:—

1. 1880. Nov. 30. "I have carefully read the two poems on 'Columbus' and am of opinion that yours is by far the best" (*sic*).

2. 1884. June 6. "I shall write *con amore*."
(The Essay was commenced at this date, and was ready for Press Dec., 1885—see Extract No. 11—not "three years" as Mr. E. M. states.)
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

3. 1884. June 29. "The pamphlet will be all written in twelve or fifteen days."

4. 1884. Oct. 24. "I forward you, registered, by this post the Essay or Brochure."

5. 1884. Nov. 3. "I am glad you are pleased with the 'comparison.' Let me suggest that whatever alterations and additions you require should be made while the brochure is being printed; I shall do them for you willingly without extra honorarium. I spent more than a month in the task of considering and writing as carefully and concisely as might be the 'Comparison.'"
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

6. 1884. Nov. 12. "Can you without inconvenience to yourself send me 'honorarium' promised for my five weeks' work?"

7. 1885. Jan. 14. "I shall be able fully to grasp the question of the alterations, remodelling, additions, etc."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

8. 1885. June 29. "Why not call the opus: "WHICH IS WHICH? or, THE VAGARIES OF THE LAUREATE,"—leaving the words Columbus at Seville and Columbus for the continuation of the title on Frontispiece."*

9. 1885. Aug. 11. "I am so anxious to make it a great success."

10. 1885. Nov. 24. "I want the MSS., now by me corrected, to be preserved and returned to me as soon as your Secretary has copied the same for the Printer. As author of 'Vox clamantis,' etc., I like the title 'Vox clamantis' very much:—the more I see it the more I like it."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

11. 1885. Dec. 8. "Shall set to work to-morrow to give a last look (and revise) to the Opus."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

12. 1885. Dec. 14. "I have no way of expressing in a substantial way my delight * * than by doing, as Hamlet says, my 'most best' for the V. C. when it requires promulgation as a published work."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

13. 1885. Dec. 17. "Perhaps it would be better to end the paragraph with *English literature*, and begin a new paragraph with the last sentence. But be this as you like best."

14. 1885. Dec. 25. "I prefer the sonnet-sentence as I wrote it, namely '*beaten* him in sonnets.'"

15. 1886. Jan. 4. "I am glad to hear that things are progressing so rapidly. What say you to the quotation from Endymion (see other side) on cover and title page? It will imply that A. T. kept a 'careful silence,' which *I* break."

This is followed by Copy Title in Mr. E. M.'s handwriting

VOX CLAMANTIS

By

Eric Mackay.

"This *clamant vôord*
Broke through the careful silence." —KEATS.

* One of the title-pages written out by Mr. E. M. himself bears the title "Tennyson Audax."

16. 1886. Jan. 9. "Apropos of the *Opus* I hope you will not forget my recommendation to have a showy paper cover, and to let R—— have a good pile of copies outside his stall, where many book-hunters congregate at all hours. Can I see one or two specimens of paper cover? Also all Smith's bookstalls all over the kingdom. May it be a big success."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

17. 1886. Jan. 12. "I am anxiously expecting arrival of the *Proofs* of 'Vox clamantis.'"
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

18. 1886. Jan. 26. "How much better *gradually* to reveal the Plagiarist-Kleptomaniac in his true colours."

19. 1886. Jan. 29. "I am anxiously expecting *revise*."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

20. 1886. Feb. 2. "I have not yet received the printed accusations against the big stealer of other people's thoughts. I am very curious to see them. When will the *revise* of 'Vox clamantis' reach me? I am very anxious to see it. The first proof reached me on my birthday, the 25th of January :—I took it as a good omen of its success."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

21. 1886. Mar. 3. "V. C. ought to be published at the latest by the end of April ;—Easter is a good time, perhaps the very best in all the year for such a publication,—and during the Parliamentary recess the daily papers have space for book-notices."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

22. 1886. Apr. 18. "I am anxious that the V. C. shall see the light *without further delay*. April is considered,—with November,—the best publishing time :—especially *April*. Very few important books are published in the summer ;—spring and autumn—those are the book-harvests."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

23. 1886. Apr. 26. "The Opus ought to be published before June,—or, if not, then—why then not till November. Between the middle of May and October is a bad publishing time,—no one expects any interesting publication then."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

24. 1886. Apr. 28. *(Mr, Eric Mackay's letter to a retired Publisher.)*
"I have now quite completed *my* brochure on the Laureate's *Plagiarisms. Its title is* 'Vox clamantis.' I think it will *take*, if properly started. What I want is a good publisher;—some good business name on the title-page. Do you think *I* could persuade Chatto and Windus to lend their name, or, better still, to take up the publication *as a* publisher's book? If you think this can be managed, may I venture to ask you to negotiate *for me? I* shall be exceedingly obliged to you if you will. Putting all personal considerations in the background, I think the matter of which I speak is one that ought to attract public attention *in the interests of English literature*, over and above the fact that *an act of tardy justice, ought not, because tardy, to be burked.** I am determined that *my brochure* shall see the light. But, as I have said, I want a good, pushing publisher. * * The brochure will be forwarded to you by this post."
(Vide Mr. E. M.'s letters to B. D. G.)

25. 1886. May 24. "Mr. R.† is most interested in V. C. He is a very nice fellow, clever, in every way up to the mark:—most intelligent. I am to have an answer in a few days."

26. May 24. "I will now try W—— and D——, unless you think you would like to see R——, with me."

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* We sincerely agree with this statement as applicable to Mr. Eric Mackay's letters to Editor of *Birmingham Daily Gazette*.

† A Publisher.

To summarise,—these Extracts, (from letters filed and numbered,) show Mr. Eric Mackay's

Origination of the inquiry (*vide* Extract 1).

Commencement of the Essay "*Con amore*" (Exts. 2, 3).

Acceptance of advice and assistance (Exts. 5, 7, 13).

Delivery of Manuscript (Ext. 4).

Application for honorarium (Ext. 6).

Revision of Printed Proofs—to last one (Exts. 11, 17, 19, 20).

Eager desire for success and wide-spread publicity (Exts. 9, 12, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24).

Proposal of Titles (Exts. 8, 15).

Claim of authorship and pride in it (Exts. 10, 24).

Approval of Title "Vox clamantis" (Ext. 10).

Offer of the work to Publishers with his own hand (Exts. 24, 25, 26).

Zeal for the interests of English Literature (Ext. 24).

Entire freedom from influence or control (Exts. 5, 14).

Writing on his own convictions—not vicariously (Exts. 2, 12, 18; see also opening passages of "Vox clamantis").

Is it then possible Mr. Mackay wrote his Essay for pay, disbelieving the imputed plagiarism? The assistance given to Mr. Mackay in the performance of the work was only such as the Tutor lends to the Tyro before his composition is presented to the Examiner, who, in this instance, is "the Public."

This is not a contention of fanciful opinion, nor an *ex parte* accusation, but is grounded upon evidence now freely submitted to the reader's judgment.

And since Mr. Eric Mackay has publicly declared "*I am not the author of 'Vox clamantis;'* I repudiate its authorship" (the italics are his own), how are we to feel firmly assured he *is* author of works he avows?

SUPPLEMENT.

A SUPPOSITIOUS PARALLEL.

Messrs. Eversley & Co., Publishers, of Paternoster Row, wishing for a "Life of Talleyrand," offered their commission for the same to Mr. Donald Dalkeith, and effected an engagement with him to write a Book of Two Vols. 8vo., each to contain at least 500 pages, the remuneration to be £700. The Manuscript was submitted to correction, and finally adopted by the Publishers, with payment to the author of £700. The Book was ready for publication, when Mr. Dalkeith visited Messrs. Eversley professing to have changed some of his views and opinions, set forth in his "Life of Talleyrand;" therefore he must either alter some passages—or his name must be withdrawn from the title-page. Messrs. Eversley reply—"No, we are satisfied; our contract and payment included the name of the author, which is essential as regards its value to us. The Book is our property, and therefore we shall publish it with the name of the author."

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BY ERIC MACKAY.

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"We deem that the Laureate will have a grave task to clear himself."—*Fifeshire Journal.*

"The indictment is framed with much skill."—*Northern Ensign.*

"The charge is somewhat startling, but the author adduces evidence in proof of his assertion."—*Monmouthshire Beacon.*

"The author proves up to the hilt that at least Lord Tennyson had read 'Columbus at Seville' before he wrote his own 'Columbus.'"—*Wakefield Herald.*

"The writer shows many striking similarities between the two works."—*Cork Constitutional.*

"Mr. Mackay's discovery is no mare's nest."—*South Wales Daily News.*

"Mr. Mackay has here produced a very remarkable comparison."—*South London Press.*

"A clever brochure."—*Gravesend Journal.*

"The little pamphlet is well worth study."—*John o' Groats Journal.*

"It seems to convict Tennyson of plagiarism of a very extensive and studied character."—*Western Daily Mercury.*

"There can be no doubt that the charge is practically proved."—*Perthshire Advertiser.*

"The numerous comparisons are very striking."—*Somerset County Herald.*

"Mr. Eric Mackay boldly charges Lord Tennyson as being a poetic kleptomaniac and plagiarist. Nor does he fail to produce *prima facie* evidence that the charge is true."—*Oxford Times.*

"Is certainly a damaging attack on the Laureate's reputation."—*Devon County Standard.*

"Mr. Mackay deserves congratulations for his work, for it can be seen that he is conscientious and really believes what he says to be true."—*West London Observer.*

"There is evidently something here that demands an explanation, and that even a Poet Laureate cannot afford to ignore."—*The Literary World.*

"No unprejudiced mind, we venture to think, will deny that here Mr. Mackay has made 'a palpable hit.'"—*North Eastern Daily Gazette.*

"Those interested in the study of plagiarisms would derive amusement by following out the similarities of idea and treatment here disclosed."—*Hampshire County Times.*

"The pamphlet certainly does show that some of Mr. Ellis's sentences are better and more metrical than many of Tennyson's loose, careless, inelegant incomprehensibilities."—*Northampton Guardian.*

LONDON: W. STEWART & CO., 41, FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.

1887.

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Mackay, Eric
Mr. Eric Mackay and "Vox clamantis"

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